

REMARKS

In the official action of April 15, 2004, the drawings were objected to, claims 53 and 58 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) and claims 60 and 61 were objected to. Also, as set forth in the action, claims 50 through 52, 54 through 57, 59, 62, 62 and 67 through 74 are allowed.

Regarding the objection to the drawings, the “openable hatch” recited in claim 63 is shown in Figs. 1, 2, 3 and 6 of the attached amended drawings, where it is identified by either the reference numeral 104 or the reference 106. In addition, the “integral hinge joining the lid and the hatch together” of claim 63 is shown in Figs. 1, 2 and 6 of the attached amended drawings where it is identified by either the reference numeral 160 or the reference numeral 162. As set forth above, Figs. 1, 2, 3 and 6 have been amended so as to clearly identify and apply reference numerals to the claimed features. Accordingly, it is believed that all claimed features are shown in the drawings.

Claim 53 was rejected as being unpatentable over the disclosure of Flachbart et al. But to the extent that Flachbart et al. discloses a flange, the same clearly is designed to be placed on top of the floor covering rather than between the floor covering and the floor. Accordingly, the taper is of no significance. In any event, claim 53 has been amended above so as to include the floor covering in the claimed combination, and the floor covering is described as “overlying said flange.” Since Flachbart et al. provide no suggestion whatsoever regarding placement of the floor covering over the flange, it is submitted that the invention of claim 53 is not obvious from the teaching of the Flachbart et al. reference. Accordingly, it is submitted that claim 53 defines patentably over the teachings of Flachbart et al.

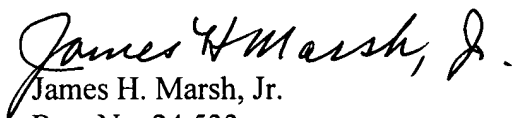
Claim 58 depends from claim 53 and is patentable over Flachbart et al. for all of the reasons set forth above in connection with claim 53.

Claim 60 has been amended so as to recite the subject matter thereof in independent form. Claim 61 depends from claim 60. Accordingly, claims 60 and 61 are now in condition for allowance.

As amended above, the application includes the same number of total claims as before but one additional independent claim. The total number of independent claims is now seven (7). However, it is believed that applicant has already paid sufficient fees for eleven (11) independent claims. Accordingly, no additional fees for excess claims is believed to be required by this amendment.

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, it submitted that the claims remaining for active consideration in this application are free of the cited art, in full compliance with the patent statutes, rules and regulations regarding formalities, and in condition for allowance. Accordingly, favorable action at an early date will be appreciated. If the examiner is of the view that any issue remains unresolved, it is respectfully suggested that applicants' undersigned attorney may be contacted by telephone at the number set forth below.

Respectfully submitted,



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